

MEAG POWER

Current

COMMUNITIES

Buford, Georgia

Phillip Beard – City Commission
Chairman

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770-945-6761



BUFORD

BUSINESS AS USUAL

The city of Buford has a notable history as a place that nurtures business. From its beginnings, it was called the “city of many factories” and local media often referred to Buford as the “New York of Gwinnett” for its industrial and economic activity. For more than 60 years, Buford was the largest city in Gwinnett County. It was the site of the county’s first banking institution as well as the recognized home of nationally- and internationally-known leather products, including shoes, harnesses, horse collars and saddles. Today the city is still home to business titans such as Heraeus Tenevo, Cardinal CG Company and Makita Power Tools, to name a few.

It’s fitting that literally steps away from Buford, the community known for its commerce, is the state’s largest retail mall, the mammoth Mall of Georgia. With over 200 stores and a 500-seat amphitheater, it is a strong economic engine for the area.

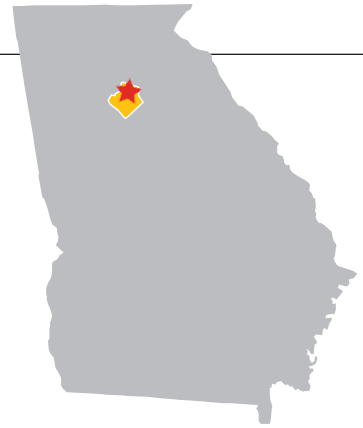
“While the Mall is not within Buford city limits, we certainly enjoy the halo effect of the development. For example, a 250-thousand square-foot retail center, including Toys “R” Us and LA Fitness, opened in 2008 in Buford,” explains City Manager Bryan Kerlin.

Kerlin adds, “We are a business-friendly environment here. Our tax digest is 70 percent industrial/commercial and 30 percent residential. That begins to tell our story.”

Local media often referred to Buford as the “New York of Gwinnett”



Fast FACTS BUFORD



POPULATION: 11,532

COUNTY: Gwinnett – Population 776,380

UTILITIES: Electric, natural gas, water and sewer

TRANSPORTATION: Buford is located on Interstate Highways I-85 and I-985 and offers proximity to four airports: Peachtree Dekalb, Hartsfield-Jackson International, North Fulton and Gwinnett

CORPORATE CITIZENS:

- Cardinal CG Company – manufacturer coated glass
- Heraeus Tenevo – manufacturer synthetic silica glass
- Makita Corporation of America – manufacturer corded and cordless power tools
- Office Depot – warehouse and distribution center
- Sundance Products – manufacturer reprocessed polypropylene
- Rohrer Corporation – printing company
- Global Equipment – manufacturer corrugated boxes

“The city is interested in renewable energy initiatives. We have partnered with the Municipal Gas Authority of Georgia on harvesting methane, a clean energy source, from a local landfill in 2009.”

City Manager Bryan Kerlin

Quality Education Excellence in education is a hallmark of Buford. Early city leaders fostered quality education, and students from all over the county sought a diploma from the city high school. Today, despite decades of consolidation efforts, Buford maintains a city school system noted for excellence in academics, arts and athletics.

Historic Past Incorporated in 1872, Buford has come a long way since its early beginnings as a depot on the railway line between Atlanta, Georgia, and Charlotte, North Carolina. As the town grew, a hotel and then a retail store were added along with churches, parks and schools. Officially established as a municipality in 1871, today Buford is a city with a solid future built on a diverse commercial base and a loyal citizenry.

THE LEATHER CITY

From horse collars in 1897 to shoes twenty years later, the community of Buford built a reputation in leather. Across the country it was known as The Leather City and this leather and tanning empire was the work of Bona Allen.

Bona Allen began manufacturing leather horse collars and harnesses in 1897, and by 1920, Bona Allen, Inc. was reputed to be the largest manufacturer of horse collars in the world. Employee and saddle maker, John Johnson, garnered national attention for his workmanship when he crafted a saddle for Hollywood cowboy/actor Roy Rogers. It seems Roy Rogers brought his famous horse, Trigger, right to Buford to be outfitted with custom saddles. A bronze statue of Trigger with saddle maker John Johnson pays tribute to the relationship of this celebrity and the leather industry of Buford.

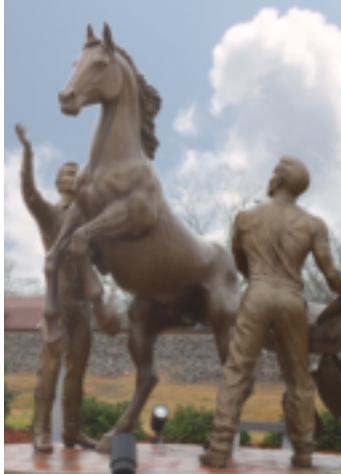
In 1913 the Allen family expanded into the shoe business and, at the factory's peak in 1928, the company produced 3,000 pairs of shoes a day. However, not all of the leather went into making shoes. The nation's largest tannery had a contract to supply the sporting equipment giant, Spalding, with raw material for the manufacture of baseballs and baseball mitts. One of Bona Allen's sons, John Q. Allen, recognized the publicity potential of the situation. Spurred on by his passion for baseball, Mr. Allen arranged for his company to field a semi-pro baseball team in 1933. The Bona Allen Shoe-makers, as they were called, mirrored the good fortune of their sponsoring company and enjoyed immediate success - the 1933 team won 56 of its 61 games. Other Allen industries included a glue factory, box factory and a large agricultural operation.

The six-acre Bona Allen Mansion, home of tannery magnate Bona Allen, still stands. Built in 1911, this beautiful building is a showcase of Italian Renaissance architecture. With 17 rooms and seven fireplaces, the home is a popular special events facility today. Additionally, a walk around the city reveals many other historic homes. The steady growth of local economics gave rise to many superb residential structures in a wide variety of styles. One can see landmarks in the Queen Anne Victorian, Greek Revival, Georgian Revival, Colonial Revival, Baronial Revival, Arts & Crafts and Mission styles, as well as the Allen Mansion's Italian Renaissance. Within the historic residential area are also many Victorian cottages, mission bungalows, and period mill houses, many of which have been restored. The families that built these homes were closely tied to the leather industry and the prosperity it brought to Buford.

Most of the vestiges of Bona Allen leather industries, which had become under the ownership of Tandy Corporation, were lost in a 1981 fire. However, the historic tannery used as a shoe factory remains. It is now home to a number of businesses, and a core group of artists who are referred to as the Tannery Row Artist Colony.



A bronze statue of Roy Roger's famous horse, Trigger, with saddle maker John Johnson, illustrates a page from Buford's history.



Left: The Italian Renaissance Bona Allen Mansion remains a landmark in historic Buford. Above: Lion sculptures flank the entrance to the Mansion.

More About **HOMETOWN** **BUFORD**

- Buford Dam, a \$44 million Corps of Engineers project, was designed to harness the Chattahoochee River. In 1956, the dam created Lake Lanier named for famed poet Sidney Lanier. Lake Lanier touches five counties with over 600 miles of shoreline creating recreational destinations and economic development for the region.
- Buford native son, Bonnie Rowe, was a nationally-known 1920-1930 daredevil. Rowe regularly performed wing-walks and aerial aerobatics to the delight of hometown crowds.
- Like many Georgia towns, the railroad played an important role in early commerce. The town was named for Algernon Sidney Buford, President of the Atlanta and Richmond Air-Line Railway. The last local rail depot agent remained until 1972.

Location Georgia, a service of MEAG Power, assists business and industry in relocation and expansion efforts. For more information about Buford, call **1-800-WIN-IN-GA.**

